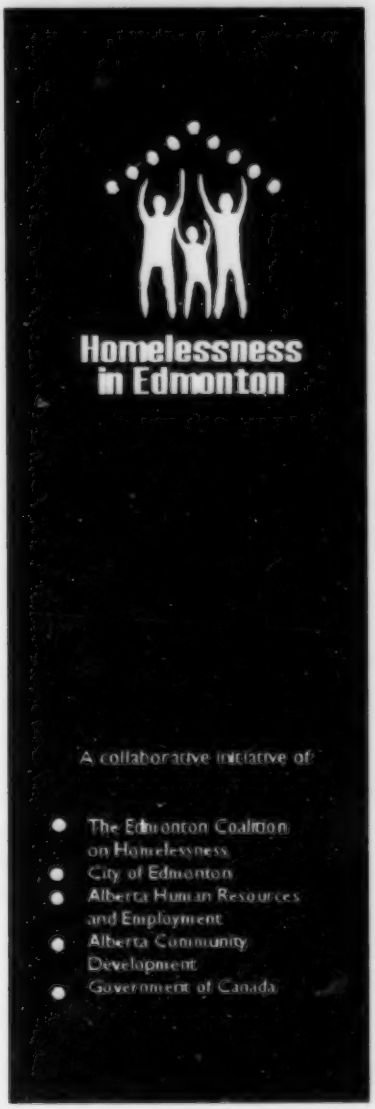

A Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton

Prepared by:
Edmonton Homelessness
Count Committee

November, 1999

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Homelessness in Edmonton

A Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton

conducted November 17, 1999 by the
Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee

SUMMARY

The second count of the homeless found 1114 homeless* persons in the City of Edmonton. Of these, 611 were absolute homeless - having no housing alternative - and 503 were sheltered homeless - living in emergency accommodations.

The Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee organized the count, applying the methodology used in the previous count (March 1999), so as to provide a consistent 'snapshot' of the homeless population. Employing the same methodology, enables the monitoring of changes and trends of the homeless population. There was a time delay from when the count was recommended to occur, as detailed in the May 1999 report *Homelessness in Edmonton, A Call to Action*. November 17th, 1999 was selected for the twenty-four hour count period. In order to conduct the count, the Count Committee acquired the active support of approximately 100 volunteers, in addition to the community serving the homeless.

- There were 64 families counted, encompassing 111 children under the age of 15 and 80 caregivers. Among the families, 63% of the individuals were absolute homeless, while 37% stayed at shelters.
- A majority of the homeless were single - 923 of the 1114 total. Among them, 53% were absolute homeless compared with 47% staying at shelters.
- From the perspective of observed gender, most of the homeless were male (70% or 644, not including children in families) and 29.6% or 271 were female. The percentage of males and females was almost equally divided between the sheltered and absolute homeless.

* **Definition:**
The Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee used the following definition of the homeless for its work.

- **Absolute homeless:** Individuals and families who are absolutely homeless (having no housing alternatives).
  During the November 17th count, this was represented by people who, when asked on the street or within agencies like drop-in centres, bottle depots or food bank(s), self reported that they had no permanent place to reside. They may have ended up sleeping 'on the street' or in a stairwell that night, or alternatively they may have stayed with a friend or found an emergency shelter space.
- **Sheltered homeless:** Individuals and families who are the sheltered homeless (living in emergency accommodations or condemned housing and expected to be 'on the street' at the end of their stay).
  During the November 17th count, this was represented by people who were registered to stay in approved emergency shelters.

Homelessness in Edmonton

- Forty-six percent were observed to be Caucasian followed by 35% Aboriginal and 19% "other." Most Caucasians were sheltered, whereas 76% of the Aboriginal were absolute homeless.
- Age groups ranged from the majority being adults (807 or 77% between 19 and 54 years) to the next largest group being children (111 or 11%), 86 youth (8%) and 42 seniors (4%) age 55 years or over.
- A count of people turned away by providers and crisis services identified 99, while an additional 45 individuals were discharged or ready for discharge from facilities but without a permanent residence.

BACKGROUND

The Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee was formed in September 1999 as a working group of The Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing. The Count Committee was created to implement the recommendation detailed in the May 1999 report *Homelessness in Edmonton, A Call to Action* that: "the count be continued on a regular basis so trends of the homeless population can be monitored".

For the purpose of the count, the Count Committee used the definition of homeless persons as outlined in the report *Homelessness in Edmonton, A Call to Action*:

"1. Individuals and families who are absolutely homeless (having no housing alternatives)" and

"2. Individuals and families who are the sheltered homeless (living in emergency accommodations or condemned housing and expected to be 'on the street' at the end of their stay)."

November 17th, 1999 was count day - a fall weekday.

The following partners collaborated and actively participated in the organization and implementation of the count: the City of Edmonton, Alberta Human Resources and Employment, Alberta Community Development, the Government of Canada, the community serving the homeless and many volunteers.

METHOD

Preparations for the count involved contacting all organizations and community agencies who work with those individuals and/or families facing issues of homelessness.

The method included a direct and indirect count to ensure as much thoroughness and accuracy as possible.

The **direct count** involved a count of people in emergency shelter beds.

The **indirect count** attempted to capture the invisible homeless through:

- **street count,** asking people on the street if they have a permanent residence to return to that night
- **agency count,** asking people at agencies (such as the food bank, drop-in centres and bottle depots) if they have a permanent residence for that night
- **turnaway count** of people turned away by providers and crisis services because no appropriate housing was available
- **discharge count** of people either discharged or ready for discharge from facilities but with no permanent residence to go to.

Demographics gathered during the count included observed gender, race and age. Family status was also documented; including the number of caregivers, and the number of dependent children. Forms documenting count results were faxed to a central number the next day, November 18, 1999.

The Count Committee acknowledges that the count methodology has inherent limitations and that the results reflect only a point-in-time. However, in order to report the count findings in a consistent manner that would allow for comparison, the November 17th count used the same methodology of that used for the March 1999 count, making the minor adjustments recommended in the May 1999 report.

Implementation of the count relied on the cooperation and involvement of the community serving the homeless and a team of volunteers. The community was divided into groups, with a coordinator assigned to organize and implement the count:

- institutions (hospitals/jails)
- inner-city agencies
- streets
- shelters (youth, adult and families)
- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
- adult group homes
- youth group homes
- seniors facilities
- subsidized housing
- housing registries
- aboriginal agencies and housing
- malls (outreach programs)
- bottle depots
- library
- food banks
- other miscellaneous crisis and assistance services

COUNT RESULTS

A total of 1114 homeless persons were counted on November 17th, 1999 in Edmonton: 611 absolute homeless (55%) and 503 sheltered homeless (45%). This includes singles as well as the adults and children within families.

TOTAL HOMELESS*		
	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	611	55
Sheltered Homeless	503	45
Total Homeless	1114	100

* Includes - Singles, Adults in Families and Children in Families

Family Status

A majority of individuals counted were single. Among the single homeless, 490 (53%) were absolutely homeless compared with 433 (47%) who were staying at shelters.

SINGLE HOMELESS*		
	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	490	53
Sheltered Homeless	433	47
Total Homeless	923	100

* Includes - Singles Without Children

There were 64 families counted, encompassing 111 children under the age of 15 and 80 caregivers. Among families, 63% of the individuals were absolutely homeless, while 37% stayed at shelters. There were 68 children and 53 caregivers among the absolute homeless; 43 children and 27 caregivers among the sheltered homeless families.

Families having one caregiver totaled 48, while 16 had two-or-more caregivers. Among the absolute homeless, 25 families had one caregiver while approximately 14 had two-or-more caregivers. At shelters, 92% of the families had one caregiver while 8% had two-or-more caregivers. Caregivers includes men, women and seniors (55 years and over).

HOMELESS IN FAMILIES								
	Caregivers By Category				Children		Total	
	2 or more	%	Single	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	28	15	25	13	68	36	121	63
Sheltered Homeless	4	2	23	12	43	23	70	37
Total Homeless	32	17	48	25	111	58	191	100

Gender

Seventy percent of the homeless were male, totaling 644 compared to 271 females. Four of those counted as absolute homeless were not identified by gender. The percentage of males and females was almost equally divided between sheltered and absolute homeless.

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED GENDER*								
	Males		Females		Other		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	312	34	143	15.6	4	0.4	459	50
Sheltered Homeless	332	36	128	14	0	0	460	50
Total Homeless	644	70	271	29.6	4	0.4	919	100

* Does Not Include Children in Families

Race

Through observations, 19% of the homeless were not classified as being either Caucasian or Aboriginal. Caucasians formed the highest percentage (46%), while 35% were observed as Aboriginal. More Caucasians were sheltered (256 compared to 165 absolute homeless), whereas 76% of all Aboriginal individuals were absolute homeless (239 compared to 74 sheltered).

Three shelters did not report observed race, therefore, all were recorded as "other" sheltered homeless.

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED RACE*								
	Caucasian		Aboriginal		Other		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	165	18	239	26	42	7	446	49
Sheltered Homeless	256	28	74	8	130	14	460	51
Total Homeless	421	46	313	35	172	19	906	100

* Does Not Include Children in Families

Age

Adults between 19 and 54 years old were the predominant age group among the homeless, at 807 or 77%. The next largest group was children (111 at 11%), then youth 15 to 18 years (86 at 8%) and seniors 55 years and over (42 at 4%).

The majority of children (68 of 111) were absolute homeless compared to 43 sheltered. Among seniors, (33 out of 42) were absolute homeless. Adults were almost divided equally between absolute and sheltered homeless. Sixty percent of the youth were sheltered homeless.

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED AGE*

	Children		Youth		Adult		Senior		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	68	7	34	3	408	39	33	3	541	52
Sheltered Homeless	43	4	52	5	399	38	9	1	503	48
Total Homeless	111	11	86	8	807	77	42	4	1044	100

* CHILDREN (in Families) YOUTH = 15-18 Years ADULT = 19 -54 Years SENIOR = 55+ Years

Turnaways & Discharges

A tally was also taken of the number of people denied a bed because the facility was full or the client didn't meet entrance standards (by, for example, exhibiting violent behavior) and who declared having no home to return to. On count day, 52 individuals were turned away from housing providers (53%) and shelters (44%). Discharges totaled 45 people, including 43 from jails, hospitals or group homes and one from shelters. These people were not included in the reported number of absolute or sheltered homeless.

COUNT OF TURNAWAYS & DISCHARGES*

	Turnaways		Discharges	
	No.	%	No.	%
Housing Providers	52	53	1	2%
Jails/Hospitals/Group Homes	3	3	43	96
Shelters	44	44	1	2
Total	99	100	45	100

* Turnaways & Discharges Declaring No Home To Return To

Shelter-by-Shelter Numbers: Registered and Turnaways

The number of homeless who were housed or turned away by each participating shelter on November 17th is outlined in the table below. Herb Jamieson Centre housed the highest number, at 139 (27%); Lurana Shelter turned away the highest number, at 19 (43%).

REGISTERED AND TURNAWAYS FROM SHELTERS						
Shelter Name	Available Spaces	No. Registered	% Occupancy	Percentage of Total Registered	No. Turned Away	Percentage of Total
Herb Jamieson	175	139	79	27	0	0
W.E.A.C.	62	78	125	15	2	5
Sally-Ann - Mats	10	9	90	2	0	0
George Spady	72	88	122	17	12	27
Urban Manor	62	62	100	12	7	16
WIN 1	21	18	86	4	1	2
WIN 11	30	18	60	4	3	7
Lurana	25	26	104	7	19	43
Safe House	6	13	217	3	0	0
Prot. Safe House	5	1	20	1	0	0
S.F.I. Hotels	??	12	??	1	0	0
Inner City Youth	29	11	38	2	0	0
Youth Emergency	28	28	100	5	0	0
Youth Receiving*	??	??	??	??	0	0
Total	525	503	88	100	44	100

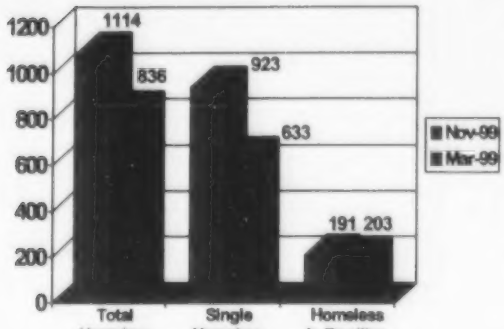
* Numbers Not Attained

COUNT COMPARISON

It is not appropriate to suggest that a trend(s) can be observed by comparing the results from the two counts (March and November 1999) or to speculate as to why a particular number is up or down. As additional counts are conducted in 2000 and 2001 we will begin to get a picture of the trend(s) year after year. Unfortunately the November 1999 count results clearly show that homelessness continues to be a significant issue in Edmonton. With this in mind, the following graphs (page 8) illustrate the numeric differences between the two counts.

COUNT COMPARISONS

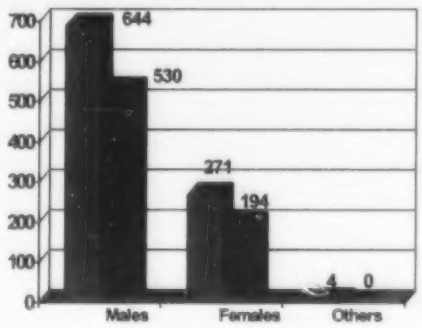
Total Homeless in Edmonton



Includes: Singles, Adults in Families & Children in Families

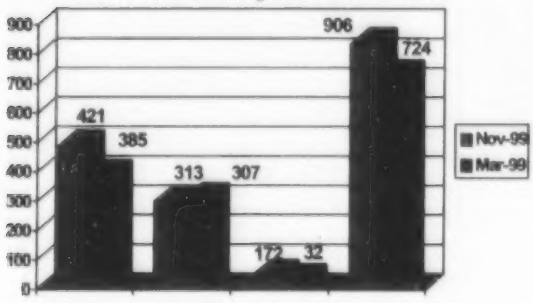
Includes: Singles Without Childen

Total Homeless By Observed Gender



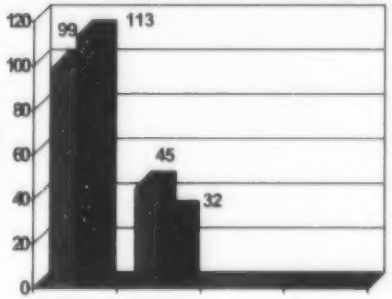
Does Not Include Children In Families

Total Homeless By Observed Race



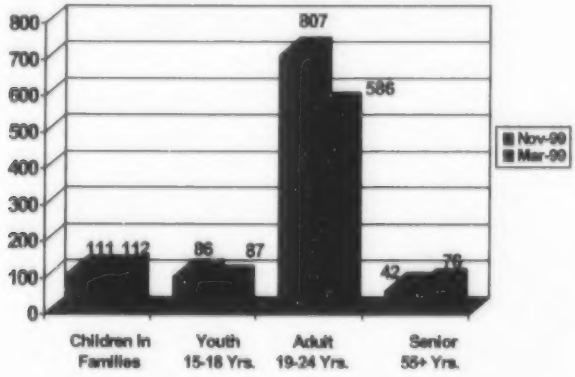
Does Not Include Childen In Families

Total Turnaways & Discharges



Turnaways & Discharges Declaring No Home To Return To

Total Homeless By Observed Age



THANKS TO THE COMMUNITY:

The Count Committee would like to take this opportunity to express their sincere appreciation and thank the many agencies and volunteers who donated their time to complete the second homeless count. Particularly we would like to recognize the efforts of Constable Elvin Toy and The Edmonton City Police Service, as well as, Gary Trudel who provided insight about street life to the volunteers prior to the count.